UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social
Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.4/1997/108
14 January 1997

Original : ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Fifty-third session
Item 16 of the provisional agenda

REPORT OF THE SUB-COMMISSION ON PREVENTION OF DISCRIMINATION AND PROTECTION OF MINORITIES ON ITS FORTY-EIGHTH SESSION

Note by the Secretary-General

1. At its fifty-second session, the Commission on Human Rights, in its resolution 1996/24, entitled "Traffic in women and girls", requested the Secretary-General to provide the Commission on Human Rights, at its fifty-third session, with his report to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolution 50/167 on traffic in women and girls.

2. Pursuant to that request, the attention of the Commission is drawn to the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on traffic in women and girls (A/51/309), which is being made available to the Commission at its present session.

GE.97-10131 (E)

UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social
Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.4/1997/109
16 January 1997

Original: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Fifty-third session
Item 4 of the provisional agenda

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES, INCLUDING PALESTINE

Note verbale dated 3 December 1996 from the Permanent Mission of the League of Arab States to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the High Commissioner for Human Rights/ Centre for Human Rights

The Permanent Mission of the League of Arab States to the United Nations Office at Geneva presents its compliments to the High Commissioner for Human Rights/Centre for Human Rights and has the honour to transmit herewith the monthly report on Israeli practices in the Palestinian and occupied Arab territories for October 1996.

The Permanent Mission of the League of Arab States wishes to express its deep concern at the aggravation of the situation of Arab civilians in the territories occupied by Israel, as described in the attached report. It requests the High Commissioner for Human Rights/Centre for Human Rights to consider this report as an official document and to circulate it to the members of the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-third session.

Annex

[Original: Arabic]

Monthly report on the latest developments on the question of Palestine and on the activities of the Department of Palestinian Affairs during the month of October 1996

1. Israeli measures in the West Bank

The Gaza Centre for Rights and Law confirmed that the Israeli authorities had sealed off the areas under the control of the National Authority on 14 occasions for a total period of 108 days during the present year. During the current month, the Israeli authorities continued their policy of imposing a military cordon, thereby inflicting further losses and suffering on the Palestinians in all economic, health, agricultural and educational fields, in addition to the military roadblocks which have been established everywhere and which are impeding the freedom of movement of Palestinian citizens and preventing them from engaging in their daily activities in a normal manner.

During the current month, the Israeli authorities also continued their policy of confiscating further areas of Arab-owned land, which were subjected to repeated encroachments by the Israeli army or settlers with a view to the construction of bypass roads designed to link the settlements and fragment the geographical unity of the Arab areas.

With regard to the confiscation of land, on 16 October 1996 settlers from the settlement of Yitzhar seized control of 40 dunums of land belonging to the village of Hawara and, on 17 October 1996, settlers protected by the Israeli army seized 500 dunums of land at Hebron and in the district of Bethlehem. Israeli plans were also made to confiscate further areas of Palestinian land.

Land belonging to the towns and villages of Salfit, Tubas, Tammun, Idna, Qalqilya, Qusin and Deir Istiya, among others, were subjected to encroachments by settlers and Israeli bulldozers which destroyed crops and prevented farmers from reaching their lands.

On 28 October 1996, the Financial Committee of the Israeli Knesset announced that it had approved an additional allocation of $4.6 million to meet the cost of the construction of new bypass roads in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The principal roads that were constructed or widened during the current month included the following:

(a) On 16 October 1996, Israeli bulldozers began to widen the bypass road to the settlement of Alfei Menasheh to the south of the town of Qalqilya;

(b) On 14 October 1996, the Israeli authorities began the construction of a military road at one of the villages in the district of Bethlehem.

According to informed sources, since the signing of the Oslo agreement in September 1993, Israel has confiscated 290,000 dunums of Palestinian land, uprooted 32,000 fruit-bearing trees and constructed about 400 km of bypass roads for Jewish settlers.

Following the decision by Binyamin Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister, to lift the restrictions that had been imposed on the occupation of prefabricated housing units, the current month witnessed a large-scale settlement campaign which, far from being confined to the settlement of Jews in those empty units, led to the establishment of new settlements.

On 23 October 1996, the Financial Affairs Committee of the Israeli Knesset decided to allocate funds for the occupation of 2,400 housing units in the West Bank settlements. It transpired that 1,700 of those housing units had actually been occupied illegally since Netanyahu's victory in the elections held last May.

On 29 October 1996, Israeli sources revealed the existence of a plan to establish a new settlement bloc, comprising 8,000 housing units, on land in the West Bank for the establishment of which Orthodox Jewish groups had been given the green light by Prime Minister Netanyahu. The aim of this project is to establish a new settlement known as Modi'in Eilit which would form a settlement bloc with the settlements of Ursamih, Matityahu and Kiryat Sefer.

On 28 October 1996, the Israeli Government decided to sell 3,500 empty housing units in a number of settlements and a start was made on land surveying and preliminary work for the expansion of several other settlements in the West Bank with a view to the construction of about 800 new housing units in the Gush Etzion settlement area.

With regard to Israeli encroachments on holy places in general, and Jerusalem in particular, the Israeli authorities reopened the door of the tunnel passing under the western wall of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, thereby giving rise to widespread indignation among the residents of Jerusalem and the Palestinian masses.

According to Israeli sources, the Minister for Internal Security was currently formulating a plan to double the number of the Israeli security forces in Jerusalem in order to improve the level of security there and control the Holy City which will form the subject of political negotiations in coming years.

It was also revealed that the Israeli Government had a new plan to seize Arab land and houses in the heart of the city. The driving force behind this plan was Ariel Sharon, the Minister for Infrastructure, who had instructed the Israel Lands Administration to expropriate Arab-owned houses and land on the pretext of building a large museum and expanding a site on which a monument to Israeli soldiers had been erected.

The Israeli authorities have also begun the construction of a 600 m long overhead walkway in the precincts of Rachel's Tomb for the benefit of the Orthodox Jews who visit that place. A start has been made on the erection of

three prefabricated houses covering an area of 150 m^2 with a view to expanding the site and accommodating the largest possible number of settlers. The purpose of this measure is to seize the site, particularly since Israeli troops have been positioned inside the Islamic cemetery adjoining Rachel's Tomb, thereby encroaching on Islamic waqf (religious endowment) property.

In addition to the young man Ra'id Muhammad who died as a result of the wounds that he suffered during the events of 29 September 1996, the current month also witnessed the martyrdom of three other persons (two residents of Sinjil in the district of Ramallah, namely Fathi Ali al-Sahouri and Abdullah Abdul Ra'ouf Karakireh, who were killed when settlers opened fire on them, and the 11-year-old Hilmi Shusheh who died after being struck on the head by an Israeli soldier).

2. Palestinian-Jordanian relations

On 15 October 1996, H.M. King Hussein paid an official visit to the town of Jericho, which was the first such visit by an Arab leader to the land of Palestine. His Majesty held a meeting with the Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and a number of senior Palestinian officials during which he emphasized his support for the peace process and, in particular, for the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations. He stressed the need to pursue those negotiations and to overcome all the obstacles impeding them.

During the meeting, H.M. King Hussein emphasized that the Palestinian people would receive full support from Jordan, with all its resources and potential, with a view to the fulfilment of their hopes and aspirations concerning their legitimate rights and Jordan would continue to play its role by making every possible endeavour to save the peace process in order to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in the region.

The meeting was attended, on the Jordanian side, by Prime Minister Abdul Karim al-Kabariti and Mr. Awn al-Khasawneh, Chief of the Royal Hashemite Court, and, on the Palestinian side, by Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, Secretary of the Executive Committee, Mr. Al-Tayyib Abdul Rahim, Secretary-General of the Presidium, and Mr. Saeb Ereikat, Minister for Local Government.

H.M. King Hussein instructed the competent health authorities in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to provide all the requisite facilities for the treatment and convalescence of the persons who were wounded or injured during the valiant Al-Aqsa uprising and who had gone to Amman to receive the necessary treatment as a generous gesture on His Majesty's part.

In the wake of the sanguinary events that took place in the Palestinian National Authority areas after the Israeli authorities opened the tunnel in the precincts of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, nine serious cases were brought to Amman for treatment at the hospital attached to the Arab Cardiology Centre and the new Jordan Hospital in view of the severe injuries that they had suffered, mainly in the upper parts of their bodies. His Majesty's noble gesture in treating those difficult cases at the Kingdom's hospitals confirmed the

Jordanian-Palestinian solidarity, as well as tne links of affection and friendship that unite the two fraternal peoples, and highlighted the manner in which Jordan is supporting and assisting the Palestinian people and their National Authority.

On 24 October 1996, Dr. Nabil Sha'ath arrived in the Jordanian capital where he was received by Mr. Abdul Karim al-Kabariti, the Jordanian Prime Minister, to whom he transmitted a verbal message from President Yasser Arafat concerning the latest political developments in the region and the outcome of the talks with the Israeli side. The two parties discussed bilateral questions and the progress of the negotiations.

On 26 October 1996, Mr. Al-Tayyib Abdul Rahim, Secretary-General of the Presidium of the Palestinian National Authority, received Mr. Ziyad al-Majali, Jordanian representative to the Palestinian National Authority, and acquainted him with the latest political developments in the light of the current negotiations with the Israeli side. They also discussed ways to promote closer cooperation between Jordan and Palestine.

On 27 October 1996, at Amman, the Jordanian Prime Minister met Mr. Faisal al-Husseini, the PLO official responsible for the Jerusalem file, and the two parties discussed the importance of concerted endeavours and a united stand in order to save the peace process from the dangers with which it was threatened.

The civil aviation authorities of Jordan and Palestine agreed to hold training courses for senior Palestinian staff so that they could operate the Palestinian airlines and Gaza airport. A complete training programme was prepared for those staff.

3. Palestinian-Israeli relations and activities of the Palestinian National Authority

(a) Palestinian-Israeli relations

In the wake of the acute crisis that overshadowed Palestinian-Israeli relations after the Israeli authorities opened a tunnel in the precincts of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, thereby giving rise to sanguinary confrontations, the region witnessed noteworthy Israeli-Palestinian activities and meetings in which attempts were made to reconcile the two sides and achieve a mutual understanding with a view to the implementation of the agreements that had been concluded but the implementation of which had been delayed due to the change of government in Israel.

After the confrontations, the American President Bill Clinton invited the Israelis and Palestinians to hold a joint meeting in Washington. Accordingly, at the beginning of the current month, a quadripartite summit meeting was held and attended by the American President, Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu and His Majesty King Hussein.

During this quadripartite summit, which lasted for several days, closed meetings were held between the Israeli and Palestinian sides which discussed ways to ensure the advancement of the peace process and the implementation of all the agreements. It was agreed that the Joint Steering Committee would resume its meetings in order to devise ways and means to put the agreements into effect.

Accordingly, on 6 October 1996, the Higher Steering Committee held its first meeting, at which the Palestinian and Israeli delegations were headed, respectively, by Saeb Ereikat and Dan Shomron, to discuss the redeployment of the Israeli forces at Hebron, as well as the other agreements that had not yet been implemented, such as those concerning the security corridor between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the release of the detainees held in Israeli prisons and the operation of the Palestinian airport in the Gaza Strip.

After 22 days of negotiations in various main and subsidiary committees at Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Taba and near the Beit Hanun crossing point, by the end of the current month the two sides had failed to devise ways to put the agreements into effect and no significant progress had been made. This was due to Israel's obstinate insistence on reviewing and amending the agreements that had already been concluded on the pretext that they did not meet Israel's security requirements. The Palestinian side, on the other hand, insisted that the agreements should be implemented as they stood.

On 15 October 1996, a meeting was held at President Yasser Arafat's guest palace at Beit Hanun between officials of the Palestinian Ministry of Agriculture and the Adviser to the Israeli Ministry of Agriculture. The Palestinian side confirmed its rejection of the proposed "Sufa" corridor unless the Israeli side agreed to the Palestinian conditions.

On 16 October 1996, the Palestinian delegation consisting of members of the Legislative Council visited the Israeli Knesset in response to an invitation from the political party known as the United Arab List. The Palestinian and Israeli parliamentarians emphasized the importance of dialogue between the two peoples and the achievement of a just and comprehensive peace.

On 17 October 1996, Avi Osher, a member of the Israeli Knesset from the Labour Party, visited the town of Tulkarm where he met the governor of the town and the chief Palestinian military liaison officer at the local liaison office.

On 20 October 1996, the Palestinian and Israeli sides held a meeting at the joint military liaison office in the town of Qalqilya where they discussed the erection by the Israeli authorities of a 1.5 km security fence to the north of the road leading to the settlement of Alfei Menasheh, since the Palestinian side objected to the erection of that fence which encroached on Arab-owned land.

The Israeli authorities postponed the negotiations concerning the operation of Gaza International Airport which had been scheduled to take place on 21 October 1996, thereby provoking indignation among the Palestinians who accused Israel of procrastinating and attempting to obstruct the signature of the protocol concerning the operation of the airport.

On 22 October 1996, in the town of Bethlehem, Palestinian President Yasser Arafat received Israeli members of the Knesset, including members of the Israeli opposition such as Salih Tarif from the Labour Party and Salih Selim from the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality.

On 29 October 1996, Palestinian and Israeli officials held a meeting at the military liaison office in the "Martyrs' Triangle" at Jenin. The two sides agreed to station joint patrols at the southern entrance to the town of Jenin as a first step towards the resumption of mobile patrols in the near future.

(b) Activities of the Palestinian National Authority

On 17 October 1996, Palestinian President Yasser Arafat inaugurated the building of the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications and put into operation the new switchboards providing 100,000 telephone lines for the Gaza Strip in order to expand and develop the existing network through the use of modern technology.

On 6 October 1996, the Palestinian leadership held a meeting which was attended by members of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization as well as members of the Council of Ministers of the Palestinian National Authority and senior members of the Legislative Council and the National Council. The participants stressed the need to demand the redeployment at Hebron and the cessation of Israeli breaches of the Oslo agreements.

The Palestinian Civil Aviation Authority took part in the meetings of the Council of Arab Ministers of Transport and Communications, which was held on 23 October 1996 at the headquarters of the secretariat of the League of Arab States at Cairo.

On 28 October 1996, it was announced that, by decision of Palestinian President Yasser Arafat, the Board of Directors of Palestinian Airlines, to be based at Gaza, had been formed and Air Commodore Fayez Zeidan had been appointed General Manager of the Company, which would be capitalized at $50 million.

4. Activities of the Department of Palestinian Affairs

The value of the projects implemented by the Department of Palestinian Affairs at the refugee camps in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan during the current year amounted to 914,066 dinars at 13 camps within the framework of the annual support that the Department provides in collaboration with the committees for the enhancement of services at the camps in order to improve the living conditions of the refugees and displaced persons and upgrade the infrastructure in those camps.

The projects included maintenance of main roads, entrances and internal thoroughfares, the construction of development complexes, sewage projects and lighting projects for the main and subsidiary streets in all the camps.

With effect from 15 October 1996, the Department of Palestinian Affairs ceased the distribution of ration cards and coupons for 1996 to displaced persons who had not received their entitlements so that it could make the necessary arrangements to formulate a plan of action for the distribution of coupons for the coming year.

It should be noted that, during the current year, the Department of Palestinian Affairs supervised the issue of 23,350 cards for 139,194 displaced persons. The number of cards actually issued and received by the persons entitled thereto in accordance with the relevant regulations and instructions amounted to 21,870, on which the names of 131,933 persons were entered. Every person received 24 kg of sugar and a similar amount of rice during the year. The cost of the distributed items amounted to about 1.5 million dinars.

On 20 October 1996, Mr. Muhammad Said al-Tarzi, the governor of the Balqa region, inaugurated the new building of the Baqa'a camp services committee in the presence of Mr. Ibrahim al-Tarshihi, Director General of the Department of Palestinian Affairs. The building, covering an area of about 500 m^2, cost 122,000 dinars. The committee's headquarters were inaugurated within the context of the celebrations on the occasion of the opening of the camp services committee's development complex consisting of three storeys and covering a total area of 1,200 m^2 and containing warehouses, commercial and administrative offices, medical clinics and a general assembly hall.

In response to a memorandum received from H.E. Mr. Muhammad Daoudiyeh, Minister for Youth, Prime Minister Abdul Karim al-Kabariti requested the Minister of Finance to earmark an amount of 100,000 dinars from the 1997 budget of the Department of Palestinian Affairs to subsidize the 13 camp clubs and construct permanent premises for them so that they could serve their members and their communities in an appropriate manner.

5. Israeli activities

(a) Israeli-Jordanian relations

The recent Israeli measure in the city of Jerusalem, consisting in the opening of a tunnel in the immediate vicinity of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, seriously affected Israeli-Arab relations in general and Jordanian-Israeli relations in particular.

During the current month, Jordanian-Israeli relations experienced what was described as their most severe crisis since the two countries signed the peace agreement. Israel's recent measures and repeated procrastination gave rise to widespread reactions inside Jordan and prompted His Majesty King Hussein to express his feelings of indignation and anger towards the Israeli side. He criticized the Israeli Government in strong terms and urged it to honour its commitments by putting the agreements fully into effect. He said that Jordan was firmly opposed to any review or renegotiation of any of the agreements signed between Israel and any other Arab party.

At the same time, His Majesty re-emphasized that the Government and people of Jordan were totally opposed to Israel's opening of the tunnel and described that Israeli measure as an act prejudicial to the principles on which the Oslo agreements were based.

In the same context, Mr. Abdul Karim al-Kabariti, the Jordanian Prime Minister, summoned the Israeli ambassador to Jordan and handed him a strongly worded note of protest concerning Israel's opening of the tunnel in Jerusalem.

In keeping with Jordan's desire to ensure the continuation of the peace process and to secure the legitimate rights of the Jordanian and Palestinian peoples, His Majesty King Hussein participated in the quadripartite summit meeting held in the United States of America and attended by Clinton, Arafat and Netanyahu for the purpose of discussing ways and means to further the peace process, overcome the recent disputes that had arisen and return to the negotiating table to complete the implementation of the agreements.

During their discussions at Amman on 21 October 1996, the Jordanian and Israeli sides agreed to permit the Jordanian airline "Royal Wings" to operate two additional flights each week from Amman to Haifa, thereby increasing the number of flights from Amman to Israel to seven per week.

On 20 October 1996, the joint Jordanian-Israeli committee monitoring the implementation of the transport agreement held a meeting at Amman to discuss questions concerning Customs, transit by trucks and buses, transit fees and insurance.

On 30 October 1996, Jordanian-Israeli discussions were held at Eilat within the framework of the joint Eilat-Aqaba committee supervising the implementation of the Eilat-Aqaba agreement concluded between the two countries as part of the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty. The Israeli delegation to the meeting was headed by Mr. Shimon Shamir, Israeli ambassador at Amman, while the Jordanian delegation was headed by Mr. Fayez al-Khasawineh. The discussions focused on the easiest ways to enable persons from both countries to travel between Aqaba and Eilat.

(b) Israeli-Arab relations

The current month witnessed a setback in Israeli-Qatari relations, since the Qatari Minister for Foreign Affairs announced that his country had decided to suspend the normalization of relations with Israel. The Qatari Government informed Israel that it held the latter and its Prime Minister responsible for this situation and was deeply concerned at Israel's denunciation of the memorandum of understanding under which Qatar was accorded preference in regard to the export of natural gas to Israel. The Qatari Government expressed its fear that relations between the two States would deteriorate, particularly since the development of the joint gas project was regarded as the principal basis for economic cooperation between the two States.

Israeli sources said that, in the light of the recent developments, the State of Qatar had decided to suspend the negotiations concerning the establishment of an Israeli embassy on its territory.

The Israeli head of State, Ezer Weizman, held a series of discussions with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak during his visit to Cairo on 14 October 1996. The two parties emphasized their countries' desire to continue the peace process and said that they would do their utmost to achieve peace between Israel and all the Arab parties.

On 16 October 1996, at Jerusalem, the Israeli Prime Minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, met the representatives of the Arab States that had established relations with Israel. The meeting, which was attended by the ambassadors of Egypt and Jordan and the representatives of the Sultanate of Oman, Tunisia and Mauritania, reviewed the respective viewpoints and stressed the need for the continuation of negotiations with the Palestinian side with a view to the implementation of the agreements.

On 25 October 1996, at Tel Aviv, Shimon Peres, leader of the opposition Labour Party, met Muhammad Basyouni, Egyptian ambassador to Israel, and preparations were made for Peres' visit to Egypt, which took place on 27 October 1996 and during which Shimon Peres met Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak at Sharm el-Sheikh where the two parties discussed the latest developments in the peace process.

Israeli sources in the Department of Foreign Trade at the Ministry of Trade and Industry announced that representatives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Trade had decided, during a meeting held on 24 October 1996, to remove Oman and Qatar from the list of States with which trade was prohibited as a first step towards the granting of permission for Qatari and Omani exports to enter Israel.

On 29 October 1996, the Higher Appointments Committee at the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs decided to appoint Zvi Mazael as Israel's ambassador to Cairo where he would replace Ambassador David Sultan who had been appointed ambassador to Canada.

(c) The internal situation in Israel

On 7 October 1996, the Israeli Knesset decided to lift the parliamentary immunity of Ehud Olmert, the mayor and parliamentary representative of Jerusalem, so that his suspected use of falsified invoices for the benefit of the Likud bloc in 1988 could be investigated.

On 16 October 1996, Knesset member Ephraim Snei announced his decision to stand for election as the Labour Party's candidate for the post of Prime Minister.

On 17 October 1996, senior Israeli authorities decided to appoint Moshe Katsav, the Minister for Tourism, as Minister for Arab Affairs, a post that had been abolished in the time of the previous Labour Government.

On 27 October 1996, the official spokesman for the Israeli Ministry of Internal Security confirmed that an office of the American Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) had been opened in Israel near the United States Embassy at Tel Aviv.

On 28 October 1996, the Knesset Parliamentary Committee decided to lift the parliamentary immunity of Raphael Pinchasi (Shas) so that he could be put on trial on the charge of making false statements and obtaining things by fraud and deceit.

6. Activities of UNRWA

Mr. Peter Hansen, the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), confirmed that General Assembly resolution 194, concerning the refugees' right to return or receive compensation, still applied but the question as to whether it would be implemented depended on the outcome of the negotiations between the parties concerned.

Mr. Hansen expressed optimism that the Agency would receive adequate financial assistance to avoid the need to reduce the standard of the services that it was rendering to the refugees. This optimism was attributable to the fact that some States and other donors intended to increase their contributions for the coming year and, in particular, a three-year agreement would soon be signed with the European Union under the terms of which the latter would continue to increase the amount of its assistance in proportion to the rate of population growth among the refugees.

Mr. Omar Ghabayin, UNRWA's Director of Education at Amman, commended the manner in which the Jordanian Ministry of Education had been cooperating on all educational matters, academic curricula and joint study projects.

Mr. Ghabayin said that the Agency was committed to providing basic education for the refugee children at the camps and wherever they might be living. He indicated that the number of male and female students enrolled at the UNRWA schools during the present academic year amounted to 148,000, distributed among 198 schools employing a staff of 4,015 male and female teachers. He pointed out that, during the present year, 75 students who had graduated at the general secondary level had been admitted to the Agency's teacher training college at Amman where 900 students were currently studying.

The Agency had suspended the emergency programme to provide employment opportunities for Palestinian refugees in the Gaza Strip following the exhaustion of the $5 million appropriated for that programme, during the last six months of which the Agency had been able to provide 2,742 short-term jobs.

On 28 October 1996, the UNRWA Director in the Gaza Strip and an official from the Netherlands legation at Ramallah signed an agreement under the terms of which the Netherlands would be providing UNRWA with assistance to renovate 229 houses and add extra rooms to 61 other houses for refugees in the Gaza Strip.

UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social
Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.4/1997/110
31 January 1997

Original: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Fifty-third session
Item 5 of the provisional agenda

QUESTION OF THE REALIZATION IN ALL COUNTRIES OF THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS CONTAINED IN THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND IN THE INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS, AND STUDY OF SPECIAL PROBLEMS WHICH THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES FACE IN THEIR EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE THESE HUMAN RIGHTS, INCLUDING: (a) PROBLEMS RELATED TO THE RIGHT TO ENJOY AN ADEQUATE STANDARD OF LIVING; FOREIGN DEBT, ECONOMIC ADJUSTMENT POLICIES AND THEIR EFFECTS ON THE DECLARATION ON THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT; (b) THE EFFECTS OF THE EXISTING UNJUST INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC ORDER ON THE ECONOMIES OF THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, AND THE OBSTACLE THAT THIS REPRESENTS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

Note by the Secretariat

1. In accordance with resolution 1996/39 of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, entitled "The relationship between the enjoyment of human rights, in particular economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development, and the working methods and activities of transnational corporations", the following documents are being transmitted to the Commission on Human Rights for its consideration and action: the background document entitled "The relationship between the enjoyment of human rights, in particular, international labour and trade union rights, and the working methods and activities of transnational corporations" prepared by the Secretary-General in pursuance of Sub-Commission resolution 1994/37 (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1995/11) and the report of the Secretary-General entitled "The impact of the activities and working methods of transnational corporations on the full enjoyment of all human rights, in particular, economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development, bearing in mind existing international guidelines, rules and standards relating to the subject-matter" prepared in pursuance of Sub-Commission resolution 1995/31 (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1996/12 and Corr.1).

2. In its resolutions 1995/31 and 1996/39, the Sub-Commission endorsed the above-mentioned document and report respectively. In paragraph 5 of its resolution 1996/39, the Sub-Commission decided to transmit them to the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-third session for consideration and action under the present agenda item. The Sub-Commission considered that it would be useful for the Commission to establish, for a three-year period, a Working Group composed of five experts nominated by Governments, to be appointed by the Chairman of the Commission at its fifty-third session on the basis of equitable geographical representation and in consultation with the regional groups in the Commission, with the following mandate:

(a) To identify and examine the effects of the methods of work and activities of transnational corporations and business entities with franchises and licences from such corporations on economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development;

(b) To investigate, monitor, examine and receive communications and gather information on the effects of the methods of work and activities of transnational corporations on economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development;

(c) To make recommendations and proposals aimed at regulating, at the national, regional and international levels, the methods of work and activities of transnational corporations in order to ensure that these are in keeping with the economic and social objectives of the countries in which they operate, and to promote economic, social and cultural rights and the right to development;

(d) To prepare each year a list of countries and transnational corporations indicating, in United States dollars, their gross national product or financial turnover, respectively.

- - - - -

UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social
Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.4/1997/111
4 February 1997

Original: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Fifty-third session
Item 4 of the provisional agenda

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES, INCLUDING PALESTINE

Notes verbale dated 18 June, 8 August and 22 October 1996 from the Permanent Mission of the League of Arab States to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the High Commissioner for Human Rights/ Centre for Human Rights

The Permanent Mission of the League of Arab States to the United Nations Office at Geneva presents its compliments to the High Commissioner for Human Rights/Centre for Human Rights and has the honour to transmit herewith the monthly reports on Israeli practices in the Palestinian and occupied Arab territories for April, May and August 1996.*

The Permanent Mission of the League of Arab States wishes to express its deep concern at the aggravation of the situation of Arab civilians in the territories occupied by Israel, as described in the attached reports. It requests the High Commissioner for Human Rights/Centre for Human Rights to consider these reports as official documents and to circulate them to the members of the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-third session.

* The annexed reports are reproduced as received in the language of submission and English only.

Annex

[Original: Arabic]

Monthly report on the latest developments on the question of Palestine during the month of April 1996

1. Israeli measures in the West Bank

In addition to the blockade which they had imposed on the West Bank and Gaza Strip since 25 February 1996 and which continued throughout the month of April, during that month the Israeli authorities intensified their security measures in the West Bank and Gaza Strip by imposing a full security cordon around the Palestinian National Authority areas and stepping up their control and search operations at the roadblocks between the Palestinian areas and at the crossing points leading inside the "Green Line". In fact, on 19 April 1996, they ordered the Palestinian towns and villages to be isolated from each other and prevented their residents from travelling between them. This led to a deterioration in living conditions in those towns and villages and had adverse effects on various aspects of life in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. On 20 April 1996, by order of the Israeli army commander in the West Bank (Bar-Ilan), the Israeli authorities began to demarcate the borders separating the West Bank from the Gaza Strip and, on 5 April 1996, the Israeli army completed its operations aimed at the reoccupation of 465 Palestinian villages situated in zone B.

The Israeli authorities also carried out more confiscation operations in various areas of the West Bank, particularly at Qaryut, Beit Lid, Masha, Jinsafut, Mount Gerizim (Nablus), Janiya, Deir Dibwan, Rafat, Ein Yabrud and Mazra'at el-Qibliya (Ramallah). In addition to confiscating approximately half the area of the town of Bethlehem for the purpose of constructing a bypass road to the north of that town, those authorities also confiscated thousands of dunums of land for the construction of seven bypass roads in the following areas:

A bypass road passing through the villages of Bir Nabala, Rafat, Judeira, Qalandiya and Beit Hanina.

A bypass road crossing a number of villages to the east of the town of Bethlehem.

Two bypass roads crossing land belonging to the villages of Samu, Dhahiriya and Tarqumiya in the governorate of Hebron.

A bypass road crossing land belonging to Kafr el-Labad and Ramin in the district of Tulkarm.

A bypass road crossing land belonging to Jalbun in the district of Jenin.

A bypass road crossing land belonging to Ein Ayyoub in the district of Ramallah.

On 12 April 1996, it was revealed that the settlement wing of the Yesha council had prepared a secret plan, known as Ha-Emanah (the Covenant), for Israeli settlement in the West Bank and Gaza Strip which would be implemented over a period of four years when Binyamin Netanyahu became Prime Minister of Israel. The plan included the following guidelines and principles: an increase in the population of the existing settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to half a million persons; the construction of tens of thousands of additional housing units there; and the establishment of 12 new settlement nuclei and 14 Israeli military positions on the principal highways in the West Bank. In addition to their demolition of eight houses in the city of Jerusalem and eight others in the town of Hebron during the month, the Israeli authorities committed numerous violations affecting the city of Jerusalem, the Islamic holy places therein and the West Bank. These violations are illustrated by the following:

(a) With effect from 1 April 1996, the Israeli Ministry of the Interior began to cancel the citizenship rights of all persons born in but living outside Jerusalem;

(b) The Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres placed the Ibrahimi Shrine at Hebron at the disposal of the Jews and closed it to Muslims during the Jewish festivals;

(c) On 8 April 1996, the Israeli police allowed dozens of settlers to enter the courtyards of the Haram al-Sharif at Jerusalem;

(d) On 10 April 1996, Israeli security forces raided and searched the Shari'a Court at Hebron.

On 1 April 1996, the Christian communities at Jerusalem protested at the fact that the Israeli police had beaten Christian participants in the Palm Sunday procession with truncheons and rifle butts, thereby depriving them of their freedom of worship and their right to engage in religious observances.

Israeli-United States relations

On 30 April 1996, an anti-terrorism agreement was signed at Washington by Bill Clinton, the President of the United States, and Shimon Peres, the Israeli Prime Minister. The agreement made provision for $100 million in United States assistance to promote closer cooperation between the United States and the Hebrew State in approximately 10 fields.

The principal fields covered by the agreement are as follows:

An exchange of information concerning terrorists and terrorist organizations.

Training of persons working in this field.

Exchange of experts.

Exchange of information concerning the transfer of funds to organizations involved in international terrorism.

Extradition and prosecution of suspects.

Enhancement of the ability of other parties to combat terrorism.

The agreement provided for the formation of a "joint United States-Israeli working group" to combat terrorism, which would meet twice a year.

In addition to that agreement, President Clinton and the Israeli Prime Minister also decided to form a bilateral committee chaired by the United States and Israeli Ministers for Foreign Affairs "to promote closer cooperation between the two countries in the field of defence and to officialize this cooperation whenever appropriate".

Israeli political parties and preparations for the elections to the Knesset

1. Lists of Israeli parties participating in the elections

The lists of parties preparing to enter the parliamentary elections in Israel were closed on 10 April 1996. The number of these legally authorized party lists in Israel amounts to 31: the Israeli Labour Party led by Shimon Peres; Ratz, led by Yossi Sarid, the present Minister for the Environment; Mapam, led by Yair Tzaban; and Shinui, led by the Minister Amnon Rubinstein (the latter three leftist parties will once again enter the elections with a joint list under the same name of "Meretz"); Likud, led by Binyamin Netanyahu; Tzomet, led by Rafael Eitan; and Gesher, led by David Levi (these parties have agreed to enter the elections with a joint list for which no single name has yet been chosen); Shas, the Sephardic orthodox movement, led by Aryeh Deri; the National Religious Party Mafdal, led by Zvulun Hammer; Agudath Israel, an orthodox religious party, led by Rabbi Meir Gorny; Agudath Ha-Haredim "Degel Hatorah", led by Rabbi Avraham Ravitz; the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality "Hadash", led by Hashem Mahamid; Moledet, an extreme right-wing movement led by Rechavam Ze'evi; the Arab Democratic Party, led by Abdul Wahhab Darawshah; Ya'oud, led by Gonin Segev, the Minister for Energy; Aliyah, the new immigrants' movement, led by Ephraim Milamed; Yisrael bi Aliyah (Israel in Migration), led by Natan Sharansky; the Third Path, a centrist movement that broke away from the Labour Party, led by Avigdor Kahlani; the Democratic Labour Organization, a leftist movement combining Jewish and Arab activists from the Sharara organization, led by Asaf Adib; Meimad, a religious movement led by Rabbi Yehuda Amital who occupies the post of Minister without Portfolio in the Peres Government; Telem Emunah (the path of faith), which broke away from the Shas movement, headed by Rabbi Yosef Azran; Moreshet Avot, an ultrareligious right-wing party that broke away from Moledet, led by Yosef Bagad; Ahdut lima'an Aliyah (Unity for Migration), which broke away from the Labour Party, led by Ephraim Gur; the Arab Movement for Change, led by Dr. Ahmad al-Teibi; the National Democratic Assembly, an Arab leftist alliance led by Dr. Azmi Bishara; Men's Family Rights ("Raash"), led by Yakov Schluss;

the Arab-Islamic Bloc, led by Abdul Malik Dahamsheh and Sheikh Atef al-Khatib; Yamin Israel, an extreme right-wing racist movement that broke away from Moledet, led by Shaul Gutman; the Settlement Party, led by Tsofir Ronen; the Israeli Pensioners' Movement ("Eil"), led by Nava Arad; and the Progressive Alliance.

2. The Arab party alliances entering the elections

On 10 April 1996, the following four Arab lists were submitted to the Central Electoral Committee: a joint list combining the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality and the Arab National Alliance led by Knesset member Hashem Mahamid; the United Arab List, consisting in an alliance between the Islamic Movement, the Arab Democratic Party and the Arab-Islamic Bloc, led by lawyer Abdul Malik Dahamsheh; the Progressive Arab List for Change, consisting in an alliance between the Arab Movement for Change and the Progressive Movement for Peace; and the Progressive Alliance List of the independent movement "Call for Concord in the Negev", led by Muhammad Zaidan.

On 14 April 1996, there was a merger between the two parties representing Jewish immigrants into Israel: Aliyah, comprising immigrants from the Soviet Union, and the Israel in Migration Party.

3. Political programmes of the Israeli parties

On 27 April 1996, the highest policy-making bodies of Likud, Gesher and Tzomet agreed on the general outline of the political programme that those parties would pursue if they won the forthcoming Israeli elections under the leadership of Binyamin Netanyahu. That programme included the following principles:

(a) The Government, while recognizing the facts resulting from the Oslo agreements, would endeavour to minimize the threats that those agreements posed to the security and future of the State of Israel;

(b) The Government would talk with the Palestinian Authority in order to continue the present arrangements. It would also conduct negotiations with a view to the achievement of a permanent settlement between Israel and the Palestinians, provided that the Palestinian Authority fulfilled all its obligations, particularly in regard to:

(i) Unconditional annulment of the provisions of the Palestine National Charter calling for the destruction of Israel;

(ii) Prevention of terrorism and cessation of inflammatory propaganda against Israel;

(c) Sovereignty over unified Jerusalem, the capital of the State of Israel, would be exercised solely by Israel. All PLO activities in the city would be halted and all PLO institutions there would be closed;

(d) The army and the security forces would enjoy full freedom of action against terrorism wherever and whenever necessary;

(e) The Government would endeavour to continue the policy of granting the Palestinians independent self-government, except in regard to foreign affairs and security, for which Israel would remain responsible, and matters requiring coordination. The Government would oppose the establishment of an independent Palestinian State;

(f) The Government would encourage the development of employment opportunities for Palestinians in the Palestinian self-governing areas;

(g) The Government would endeavour to secure Jordanian involvement in the permanent settlement in fields to be agreed upon during the negotiations.

The Labour Party's new political programme, which was made public on 22 April 1996, clearly omits two provisions that were included in its previous programme; the first concerns rejection of the establishment of a Palestinian State, while the second stipulates that "even in the event of peace, the Israeli presence in, and control of, the Golan Heights will continue".

The Labour Party's political programme stated, in particular, that the negotiations concerning the permanent settlement with the Palestinians would be based on the Oslo agreement and Israel would respect the following principles:

* United Jerusalem would remain the capital of Israel under Israeli sovereignty.

* Israel would never seek to dominate another people.

* The River Jordan constituted a secure eastern border for Israel and no other army would be stationed to the west of it.

* Separation would safeguard the national identity and needs of the two peoples.

* Israel would retain sovereignty over the Jordan Valley, the area to the north-west of the Dead Sea, Gush Etzion and areas vital for Israel's security.

* The Palestinians' right to return would be denied.

* Most of the Israeli settlers would remain under Israeli sovereignty.

* No new settlements would be established.

* The permanent settlement would be submitted to a popular referendum.

* The negotiations with Syria would continue. The desired agreement would be based on secure borders, firmly established security arrangements, a guarantee of the necessary water resources for Israel and full normalization of relations between the two States, with emphasis on economic cooperation. The permanent agreement would be submitted to a popular referendum.

On 8 April 1996, Yossi Sarid, the Israeli Minister for the Environment, declared that the political aims of the Meretz movement were as follows:

(a) Recognition of the Palestinian people's right to establish its own independent entity, consisting in a Palestinian State alongside the State of Israel;

(b) Withdrawal from the Golan in return for full peace with Syria, including special security arrangements;

(c) Retention of 6-7 per cent of the land in the West Bank, on which Israeli settlements have been established, under Israeli sovereignty;

(d) Jerusalem would remain the indivisible capital of Israel.

Confrontation with Israeli right-wing extremists

On 13 April 1996, Shlomo Lahat, the head of the Israeli popular grouping supporting Shimon Peres, received a telephone call from a person claiming to speak on behalf of Yigal Amir who threatened him with death unless he ceased his electioneering activities in favour of the Israeli Labour Party.

On 13 April 1996, Moshe Shahal, the Israeli Minister for Internal Security, received telephone threats from followers of Rabbi Uzi Meshulah who threatened to shoot him unless he met the demands of the rabbi's imprisoned followers who were on hunger strike.

5. Activities of UNRWA

On 1 April 1996, UNRWA used $5 million donated by the Norwegian Government to launch an immediate short-term programme to provide employment opportunities in response to the socio-economic crisis resulting from the closure of the Gaza Strip. Through this programme, UNRWA intends to provide temporary employment opportunities over a five-month period for a total of 2,570 unemployed Palestinians, who will be paid a daily wage of US$ 12. More than 1,300 Palestinians are being recruited by UNRWA (635 in the field of environmental health, 544 in education and 150 in relief and social services, while others are being employed in various UNRWA departments). A further 475 Palestinians are being recruited by non-governmental organizations and more than 100 Palestinians have been recruited by the Palestinian National Authority's Ministries of Health and Justice.

On 17 April 1996, the heads of 11 municipal and village councils in the Gaza Strip took delivery of 17 trucks, 2 bulldozers and 2 tractors which UNRWA had purchased by virtue of a $1.8 million donation from Japan for use in solid waste disposal projects.

The Japanese ambassador Harumiko Shibawa and UNRWA's Director of Operations Claus Worm handed over that equipment at the UNRWA office.

On 17 April 1996, a start was also made on the implementation of the project to construct the Izbat Beit Hanun secondary school for girls, which will be run by the Palestinian Ministry of Education, and the

Izbat Beit Hanun preparatory school for girls, which will be run by the UNRWA Department of Education. The Japanese Government's donation for the construction of these two schools amounted to $2.6 million.

With regard to the role that UNRWA is playing in helping to develop the infrastructure in Palestine, Mr. Worm said that the Agency was continuing to assist in the development of vital sectors in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. For example, it was cooperating with the Ministries of Health and Planning and International Cooperation. It had already constructed two hospitals in the southern part of the Gaza Strip and, two weeks ago, had begun the implementation of environmental projects.

On 4 April 1996, Mr. Robert Hopkins, UNRWA's Director-General in Jordan, opened a legal advisory office at the Centre for Women's Programmes in the Al-Hussein camp. This office was opened with funding from the German Government, which provided about $17,000 for the establishment and equipment of this and another office at Wahdat camp.

On 4 April 1996, UNRWA, acting in collaboration with the Canadian International Development Agency, opened a food production unit at Al-Hussein camp in keeping with the emphasis that the UNRWA is placing on the role of women in economic participation and local community development. The aim of the unit is to enable the most disadvantaged female refugees to acquire the skills and expertise needed to manage projects and improve their family's level of income and to provide opportunities for enterprising female refugees to receive training in production skills.

Mr. Hopkins emphasized that the Agency had no intention of charging school fees for the education that refugee children received at UNRWA schools, nor did it intend to charge fees for the health services that the Agency was providing for refugees at various centres and clinics. In an interview with the Jordanian News Agency, he said that the question as to whether such fees should be charged had been raised by the donor States in 1993 and 1994 and, at the time, it had been decided to charge nominal fees. However, that decision had never been implemented.

With regard to the transfer of UNRWA headquarters from Vienna to Gaza, Mr. Hopkins said that the presence of the Agency's headquarters at Gaza would facilitate and speed up communications between the Commissioner-General and the Agency's local directors of operations and would thereby have a favourable effect on the Agency's services. He said that the Commissioner-General had instructed an expert group to study the situation and living conditions of the Agency's employees and to prepare a report on this subject.

Concerning the Agency's future in the light of developments in the peace process, the Director-General said that the Agency could not be abolished before a final solution had been found to the Palestinian problem. With regard to the Agency's relations with the Jordanian Government, Mr. Hopkins said that there was close coordination and cooperation between various Jordanian government departments, particularly the Department of Palestinian Affairs, and the Agency in the provision of services for refugees.

Mr. Hopkins pointed out that the Agency had recently received an amount of $1 million from Japan to improve the sewage and drainage systems in the Palestinian camps in Jordan. He said that the Agency was suffering from a serious financial situation although, in general, it was in a better position than the United Nations.

In addition to its initial pledge of $15 million to UNRWA's regular budget for 1996, the United States of America had pledged a further donation of $55 million of which part ($200,000) would be appropriated for an external organizational study on the transfer of UNRWA headquarters from Vienna to Gaza. The United States of America had also pledged an amount of $608,608 to improve three school complexes at the Yarmouk camp in the Syrian Arab Republic and an amount of $728,584 for a number of projects in Jordan.

Norway had pledged $5 million for an immediate short-term job creation programme in the Gaza Strip.

The United Nations Population Fund had pledged $132,174 to cover the costs of the family planning programme requirements in the Syrian Arab Republic, Lebanon, Jordan and the West Bank.

Australia had confirmed its pledge of $100,000 for the transfer of UNRWA headquarters to the region.

Austria had donated $100,000 as part of its pledged donation to the Agency's regular budget in 1996.

The Middle East and Africa Association in Japan had donated $9,447 for the purchase of hearing aids for disabled Palestinian refugees in Lebanon.

The Save the Children Fund in the United Kingdom had donated $3,806 for the programme to train midwives in the West Bank.

The Maldives had pledged and paid $1,000 to UNRWA's regular budget for 1996.

Monthly report on the latest developments on the question of Palestine during the month of May 1996

1. Israeli measures in the West Bank

The blockade that had been imposed on the towns, villages and camps in the West Bank and Gaza Strip since 25 February 1996 continued during the month of May, at the beginning of which Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres confirmed that Israel had no intention of lifting the blockade before the Israeli elections. In addition to the blockade, the Israeli authorities tightened the cordon around the Palestinian National Authority areas at dawn on 15 May 1996, i.e. two weeks before the scheduled date of the Israeli elections, on the pretext that intelligence reports had indicated that some groups intended to carry out operations designed to influence the outcome of the elections.

As a result of these tighter restrictions, all the facilities and special permits that had been granted during the previous two months were cancelled and, consequently, the small number of Arab workers who had been permitted to work in Israel could no longer go there.

West Bank towns and areas were isolated from each other through the establishment of military roadblocks on the roads linking them and also on all the roads and entry points leading to Israel and the city of Jerusalem. All the Palestinians who were permitted to enter Israel were subjected to strict security checks, which had detrimental effects on all aspects of life in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The Israeli authorities continued their policy of confiscating further areas of Palestinian-owned land in various parts of the West Bank, particularly in the district of Qalqilya, in which more than 300 dunums of land were confiscated, and in the district of Hebron with a view to promoting settlement in that town. Israeli encroachments and violations also continued for the purpose of constructing bypass roads, for which hundreds of trees were uprooted and more land was excavated in the following areas:

A bypass road crossing land belonging to Abud, Rantis and Shuqba in the district of Ramallah.

A bypass road linking the "Green Line" with the settlement of Tzofim to the north of Qalqilya.

An 80-m wide bypass road crossing land belonging to the towns of Jaiyus and Qalqilya.

A bypass road crossing land belonging to Jab'a and Surif.

The construction and expansion of a road crossing land belonging to the villages of Beit Dajan, Salim, Deir el-Hatab and Beit Furik in the governorate of Nablus.

Due to the increase in election fever during this month when the heads of the two leading parties in Israel attempted to win over the electorate,

both Shimon Peres and Binyamin Netanyahu made statements in which they promised to improve the situation of the settlers if they won the election.

On 4 May 1996, it was revealed that there was a new plan to expand the settlement of Givat Zeev, which is situated in the West Bank to the north of the city of Jerusalem. The plan included the construction of a 17-storey residential tower block containing 45 apartments and also a large commercial centre at that settlement. The settlement of Maaleh Adumim at Khan el-Ahmar to the east of the city of Jerusalem also witnessed construction activity and large-scale sales of new residential apartments and the Israel Lands Administration advertised for tenders to construct 80 new residential units at that settlement.

The District Planning and Construction Commission of the Israeli Ministry of the Interior rejected the protests submitted by residents of Sur Bahir, Umm Tuba and the town of Beit Sahur who own the land on which the settlement of Har Homa is to be built even though they hold documents proving their ownership.

On 13 May 1996, the Israeli Government approved the appropriation of 11.5 million shekels for investment in the development of the settlement of Kiryat Sefer, to the west of the town of Ramallah, which is inhabited by ultra-orthodox Jews. This amount covers the costs of completing the construction and development of 510 residential apartments built between 1989 and 1992, as well as half the cost of the construction of 600 new residential units.

According to sources close to the Jewish Settlement Council in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the financial resources that the Labour Government had invested to support settlement activities in the Palestinian territories exceeded those invested by the previous Likud Government for that purpose. The number of settlers had also increased by 40 per cent under the Labour Government.

During the month of May, in addition to demolishing four houses in villages in the districts of Jerusalem, Nablus and Ramallah, the Israeli authorities took a number of measures constituting collective punishments against large sections of the Arab population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. These measures included the following:

(a) On 7 May 1996, the Israel Telecommunication Corporation (Bezeq) cut off international communications with the Palestinian Authority areas;

(b) On 8 May 1996, the Israeli electricity company randomly cut off the electric power supply to the town of Gaza without prior notice;

(c) On 7 May 1996, the Israeli authorities closed the new mosque at Qabalan (19 km to the south of Nablus). On 14 May 1996, they also closed two other mosques in the West Bank.

2. The Israeli elections

The most outstanding event on the Israeli scene during the month of May 1996 was the elections to the premiership and the 14th Knesset which were held in the midst of tight security measures and unprecedented international interest and anticipation in view of the effects that these elections would have on the peace process and on the notable changes and activities taking place in the Middle East.

On the morning of 29 May 1996, the 3,339,250 Israelis entitled to vote went to 6,714 polling stations distributed throughout Israel in order to choose the Prime Minister for the next four years and elect 120 members to the 14th Knesset. At midday on 30 May 1996, the Central Electoral Committee announced that Binyamin Netanyahu, the leader of the Likud Party, had been elected Prime Minister by a majority of 50.49 per cent of the votes cast and would therefore succeed his rival Shimon Peres, the leader of the Labour Party, who had obtained 49.51 per cent of the votes.

In these elections, Binyamin Netanyahu was supported by 1,501,033 voters, while his rival Shimon Peres was supported by 1,471,566 voters (a difference of 29,467 or 0.9 per cent) in the first direct poll ever held in Israel to elect, at the same time, the Prime Minister and the members of the Knesset.

Under Israeli law, the new Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu had 45 days in which to form a coalition enjoying the support of 61 of the 120 parliamentary seats as an expression of the Knesset's confidence in the Government that he would form. The seats were distributed among the parties and lists as follows:

The left-wing parties obtained a total of 52 seats, distributed as follows: the Labour Party led by Shimon Peres - 34 seats; the Meretz movement led by Yossi Sarid - 9 seats; the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality led by Hashim Mahamid - 5 seats; and the United Arab List - 4 seats.

The right-wing parties won 43 seats distributed as follows: the Likud-Tzomet-Gesher alliance led by Netanyahu - 32 seats; the National Religious Party (Mafdal) led by Zvulun Hammer - 9 seats; the Moledet Party led by Rechavam Ze'evi - 2 seats.

The orthodox religious parties obtained 14 seats of which 10 were won by Shas, the Sephardic Jewish party, and 4 by Yahdot Hatora led by Meir Porush.

The Third Path party led by Avigdor Kahlani won 4 seats and the Israel bi-Aliyah party led by Natan Sharansky won 7 seats, these two being new parties that were not represented in the previous Knesset.

The other parties were supported by no more than 1.5 per cent of the total number of voters.

3. Activities of UNRWA

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East announced that it would be transferring its headquarters from Vienna to Gaza on 15 July 1996.

At a press conference held on 7 May 1996, Sandro Tucci, head of the UNRWA Information Office, said that UNRWA had been faced with a financial deficit of $1 million during the last two years. However, he affirmed that the Agency would maintain the level of its services, which would be reduced only if there were no other alternative. He said that the UNRWA budget for 1994/95 amounted to $320 million, which had been appropriated in order to cover the cost of basic services such as education, health and relief.

The Commissioner-General of UNRWA decided to grant the Agency's staff in Jordan an increment amounting to 8.1 per cent with effect from 1 July 1996 in view of the petitions that they had submitted to Mr. Peter Hansen and in which they threatened to resort to strike action if their demands were not met.

On 10 May 1996, at Amman, the UNRWA Council of Directors held meetings that were attended by the area directors, the directors of operations and senior administrative staff from the Agency's offices in its five areas of operations (Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip). During a visit to Jordan, Mr. Peter Hansen, the Agency's Commissioner-General, was received by His Highness Prince Hassan, the Crown Prince, in his office where they discussed a number of matters and questions concerning UNRWA's role and activities for the benefit of Palestinian refugees, as well as possible solutions to overcome the financial crisis from which the Agency was suffering.

The Agency introduced a uniform examination system for the second academic term in the sixth and ninth basic grades in some subjects taught at its schools.

A joint UNRWA-UNHCR delegation visited 159 refugees who had been stranded on the Egyptian-Libyan border for more than a year. They provided them with medicines and other materials of which they were in need and, on the conclusion of the visit, the delegation held a meeting with the Palestinian and Libyan ambassadors at the Libyan Embassy in Cairo in order to inform them of the results of its mission.

The following donations were reported to have been received by the Agency:

The Swiss-German CARITAS aid organization pledged an amount of $10,000 as a contribution towards the costs of operating a maternal and child care clinic at Am'ari camp in the West Bank in 1996.

Germany pledged an amount of $1,597,366 for the project to construct and furnish a preparatory/secondary school in Lebanon.

Holland pledged an amount of $1,764,706 to the general fund for Lebanon in 1996.

Finland pledged an amount of $1,455,301 to UNRWA's regular budget for 1996.

Norway pledged an amount of $1 million as a contribution to the costs of transferring UNRWA headquarters from Vienna to Gaza and Amman.

The international "Rainbow" ship in Japan pledged an amount of $5,000 to UNRWA's general fund in Jordan. In addition, this organization donated 13 boxes and packages of stationery, games and medicines to the Japanese School and the health centre at the Baqa'a camp in Jordan.

Tenders were received for the commencement of the implementation of agreements signed between the Arab Gulf Programme for the United Nations Development Organizations (AGFUND) and UNRWA in March, under which a total of $120,000 was pledged to finance the first and second phases of the construction and development of a diesel mechanics workshop for second-year students at the Kalandia Training Centre in the West Bank. The Italian Government was reported to be helping to fund the construction and equipment of the workshop.

Monthly report on the latest developments on the question of Palestine during the month of August 1996

1. Israeli measures in the West Bank

During the month of August 1996, the Israeli authorities continued their measures to tighten the blockade of all the towns in the West Bank and Gaza Strip which is obstructing the freedom of movement of Palestinian citizens between the various self-governing areas. They also continued to prevent the movement of students and goods and fabricated pretexts for the maintenance of this blockade, thereby causing severe material losses to the Palestinian economy and suffering to the Palestinian population.

A report issued by the Palestinian Ministry of Health affirmed that 16 residents of the Palestinian National Authority areas had died as a result of the blockade and the Israeli measures that had been taken against the population, and particularly sick persons, since 25 February.

The Israeli authorities persisted in their refusal to issue transit permits for husbands and wives living in the Gaza Strip and wishing to travel by road to the West Bank. As a result, Palestinian families were split and living in a state of suffering and despair.

During the month, there was a notable escalation in the Israeli assault on the city of Jerusalem and its Arab residents. Representatives of the Israeli police handed an order to Hatim Abdul Qadir, a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, prohibiting any activity by the Palestinian Authority in East Jerusalem and requiring him to immediately cease work in the office that he had opened at Beit Hanina in the Jerusalem district. The Israeli police subsequently raided the office, confiscated its contents and closed it.

According to reports received from the Palestinian territories, the Israeli Government had formed a special ministerial team led by Zvulun Hammer, the Minister of Education, and Ehud Olmert, the mayor of Jerusalem, to monitor the application of the so-called "rule of law and order" in East Jerusalem with a view to maintaining full Israeli sovereignty over all parts of the city. This team would be formulating proposals and recommendations to curb infiltration by the Palestinian Authority in Palestinian educational institutions and bodies in the eastern half of the city.

The measures taken against Arab institutions at Jerusalem included the demolition, on 27 August 1996, of the "Laqlaq" building at Bab Hatta in the Old City from which the care of local children and elderly and retired persons was supervised. The demolition operation was carried out on the pretext that the charitable association's meeting hall had been renovated in an illegal manner.

In the face of increasing Israeli pressure on the Palestinian Authority to close all its offices in the city of Jerusalem as one of the preconditions for Israeli withdrawal from the town of Hebron, which had been delayed beyond the date scheduled in the programme for the implementation of the agreements reached between the Israeli and Palestinian parties, the Palestinian

Authority, as a gesture indicative of its good intentions, closed three of its offices in East Jerusalem (the Office for Geographical Studies, the Palestinian Office for Youth and Sports and the Statistical Office). In spite of this Palestinian gesture, however, there were no new developments on the question of withdrawal from Hebron; on the contrary, the Israeli Government continued to procrastinate on this question, claiming that it was endeavouring to formulate a new withdrawal plan comprising a number of modifications in keeping with its view of the situation. The reports went on to say that the Israeli ministerial committee following up on the question of Hebron was endeavouring to formulate a proposal for the division of the town into civil as well as security sectors.

During the period covered by this report, the settlers continued their acts of aggression against Arab citizens and their property. The towns and villages of Beit Jala, Khan Yunis, Deir al-Balah, Yatta, Tubas, Hebron and Qalqilya were subjected to repeated attacks on their land, crops and various items of property by settlers living in the settlements bordering on those areas.

The towns of Qalqilya, Ramallah and Tubas were the target of land confiscation campaigns and encroachments by Israeli bulldozers which excavated and levelled the confiscated land in preparation for the construction of bypass roads to link Jewish settlements at the expense of Arab territorial unity. An example of this can be seen in the construction of the bypass road that crosses land belonging to the village of Madama to the south of Nablus in order to link settlements to the east of Nablus with the road leading to the town of Qalqilya. The Israeli authorities also continued work on the construction of a bypass road in the area of Beit Jala, as well as the construction of a flyover and a tunnel to link the Jewish settlements of Jerusalem with the southern part of the West Bank.

The Israeli authorities also authorized commencement of the construction of a military road in the Bethlehem area to the south of the Arab city of Jerusalem at a cost of $8 million.

With regard to new settlement, the expansion of existing Jewish settlements and the preparation of plans to promote settlement, on 2 August 1996 the Israeli Prime Minister announced that the Cabinet had decided to terminate the freeze on Jewish settlement on Arab land which had been imposed by the previous Israeli Government in August 1992. This aroused indignation among all the international bodies and forums seeking to advance the peace process, and particularly among the Palestinians. Following that decision, Yasser Arafat, the Chairman of the Palestinian Authority, sent a letter to Mr. Netanyahu in which he protested against his Government's decision and warned of the dangers inherent in any practical steps to implement that decision.

After the announcement of the lifting of restrictions on settlement, the Jewish settlers lost no time in expanding their settlements. The settlers at Itamar, which was established on land belonging to the villages of Awarta, Rujib and Beit Furik, built a number of houses on the eastern side of the settlement and their example was followed by settlers at Brakha who added a number of houses to their settlement.

The Israeli settlement institutions began to implement the decision by Yitzhak Mordechai, the Minister of Defence, to add prefabricated houses to the settlements by commencing the erection of prefabricated houses at settlements near Jericho.

There was also a notable increase in the pace of construction work at the settlements of Salit, Kokhav Yair, Enav, Avnei Hefetz and others pursuant to the Israeli Government's decision.

The Israeli newspapers revealed a plan that had been prepared by the Jewish Settlement Council in the West Bank and Gaza Strip with a view to increasing the number of settlers to half a million during the next four years.

At a meeting with the heads of the settlements in the West Bank, Eli Suissa, the Minister of the Interior, promised to grant them 15 million shekels in emergency aid as compensation for the Oslo agreements which had increased the expenditure of the Jewish councils. He also promised to give special attention to the structural plans that had been frozen by the previous Government, including a plan to construct 2,500 housing units at the settlement of Adam at Jerusalem.

Israeli press sources indicated that Meir Porush, the Israeli Deputy Minister for Housing, intended to construct 15,000 housing units for orthodox Jews, including 6,500 units at the western entrance to Jerusalem, 3,500 units at the settlement of Kiryat Sefer and 900 units at the settlement at Beitar. On 27 August 1996, the Israeli Minister of Defence approved a plan for the construction of 900 new residential units at the settlement of Kiryat Sefer in the Ramallah district. He decided that the implementation of the construction plan at this settlement should begin immediately and the settlement residential area would include 1,806 housing units. The other 900 units would be approved at a later stage.

Within the framework of the settlement assault on the Holy City, it was revealed that the Israeli Ministry of Housing was preparing a plan to build a new settlement city at a distance of a few metres from the city of Jerusalem to the north of the settlements of Neve Yaacov and Givat Zeev in the direction of Ramallah.

During the month, there was also a notable escalation in the policy of demolishing Arab-owned houses. On 19 August 1996, Israeli bulldozers demolished four houses at Beit Dajan on the pretext that they were situated in a military zone. On 12 August 1996, Israeli bulldozers also demolished five houses in the villages of Kafr Aqab, Hizma and Anata on the pretext that they had been built without a permit. Five other houses situated on the borders of Jerusalem Municipality at Isawiya, Sur Bahir and Silwan were also demolished on the pretext that they had been built without a permit. Moreover, on 28 August 1996, the Israeli authorities demolished five other houses near Tulkarm and another house in the Semiramis area of Ramallah on the same pretext.

2. The internal situation in Israel

On 8 August 1996, Yaacov Neeman, the Israeli Minister of Justice, tendered his resignation from the Government after the Israeli police had questioned him on suspicion of involvement in a number of criminal offences, including obstruction of the course of justice during the trial of Aryeh Deri, the leader of the Shas movement.

The Israeli Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs agreed to appoint General Dan Shomron, the former Chief of Staff, as chairman of the Higher Supervisory and Steering Committee that will be responsible for implementing the transitional stage agreement with the Palestinian Authority. It was also agreed to form a steering committee at ministerial level, chaired by the Prime Minister and comprising the Minister of Defence and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, to direct the parallel negotiations with the Syrians and Lebanese.

On 21 August 1996, the legal adviser to the Israeli Government instructed the head of the investigation department in the police to question Knesset member Dedi Zucker from the Meretz movement on suspicion of receiving funds through fraud and deception.

On 23 August 1996, the Israeli Prime Minister decided to form an advisory group on national security, headed by Lieutenant General Zeev Levi, which would be attached to the Office of the Prime Minister.

On 28 August 1996, Turkey and Israel signed an agreement providing for cooperation and an exchange of expertise between the two parties in the defence industries.

3. Activities of UNRWA

On 25 August 1996, the Palestinian President Yasser Arafat unveiled the commemorative plaque at the headquarters of UNRWA in the governorate of Gaza to herald the commencement of work at the Agency's new headquarters at Gaza to which it had moved from Vienna about three months earlier.

During the inaugural ceremony, President Arafat was accompanied by a number of senior officials of the Palestinian Authority together with Mr. Peter Hansen, the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, with whom he carried out an inspection visit to the various parts of the building.

On 27 August 1996, Mr. Hansen met with Dr. Nabil Shaath, the Minister for Planning and International Cooperation, at the Ministry's headquarters at Gaza. During the meeting, they discussed the manner in which the Palestinian National Authority could support and assist the Agency in order to ensure the continuity of its services to Palestinian refugees living in Palestine or abroad. They also discussed a plan to cover the Agency's budgetary deficit,

as well as the role that the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation would be playing in helping the Agency to obtain what it needed to avoid any reduction in its health, food and educational services.

Minister Shaath explained that the Agency was the body responsible for the refugees and the Palestinian National Authority did not constitute a substitute for the Agency, the activities of which would end only when the problem of the refugees had been fully solved.

On 31 August 1996, studies began in the new academic year at all the UNRWA schools in the Gaza Strip, where 140,000 male and female students attended 163 primary and preparatory schools.